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LI charter school to open vocational high school | Newsday

BUSINESS**LI charter school to open vocational high school**

Academy Charter School plans to open a high school offering career and technical training in Uniondale this fall. Credit: Rubenstein Associates/Academy Charter School

By Victor Ocasio

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A Long Island charter school plans to open a new high school in Uniondale this fall dedicated to technical and vocational training in the culinary arts, technology and medical fields.

Academy Charter School, one of the Island's fastest growing charter schools, said it received approval for the career technical education program earlier this month from the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, which authorizes charter schools in the state.

One of the main drivers behind the new school, officials with Academy Charter said, is the need to provide students with the option to pursue in-demand career fields in lieu of or in conjunction with a traditional college experience.

"We want our students to realize that there are other options available to them, not just a pure complete college track," said Barrington Goldson, founder and president of Academy Charter School, and bishop of the Calvary Tabernacle in Hempstead. "The jobs are there."

The new school will offer training for culinary careers. Credit: Rubenstein Associates/Academy Charter School

The new school, to be located at 100 Charles Lindbergh Blvd. in Uniondale, will open with 125 seats for ninth grade students and will focus initially on three primary areas of training -- culinary arts, technology and health care.

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Academy Charter will spend \$2 million to renovate and outfit the school for its first year of operation.

Offerings will be expanded in subsequent years to include automotive, construction and welding, said Nicholas Stapleton, chief academic officer for Academy.

Students will receive at least 216 hours of vocational training, including a minimum of 54

hours of work-based training per vocational course, officials said. Graduates could be certified or credentialed in areas including carpentry, plumbing, electrical, medical billing and coding, lab technology, computer network management or auto body design and repair.

Academy Charter School opened in 2009 in Hempstead with 150 students in kindergarten through third grade. It operates five schools on Long Island, including a high school opened in 2016.

In 2018, Academy opened its first Uniondale location, which serves 250 students in K-3rd grade.

The SUNY Charter Schools Institute said only one of the 186 charter schools it has authorized in the state currently offers a vocational training program.

Most public school districts on Long Island offer some form of career and technical education, either at school campuses or through BOCES, according to the state Education Department.

Nassau County BOCES provides career and technical education to 1,796 students. Western Suffolk BOCES provides programming for 1,775 students, while Eastern Suffolk BOCES serves 1,822.

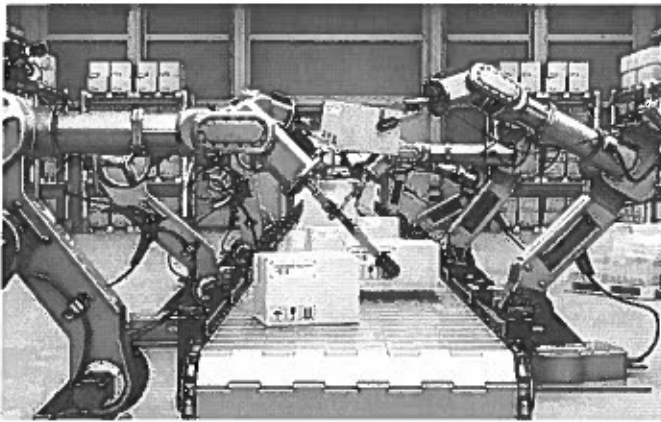
Another charter school with plans to expand in Hempstead, where Academy has several school locations, is Evergreen Charter School. Earlier this week, hundreds of residents packed the auditorium of Hempstead High School to debate the proposed expansion of Evergreen's educational offerings from 750 students in grades K through 8 to 1,100 students that would include grades 9 through 12.

Concerned parents and students said they worried that the expansion would direct funds away from programs and educational quality initiatives at Hempstead High School.

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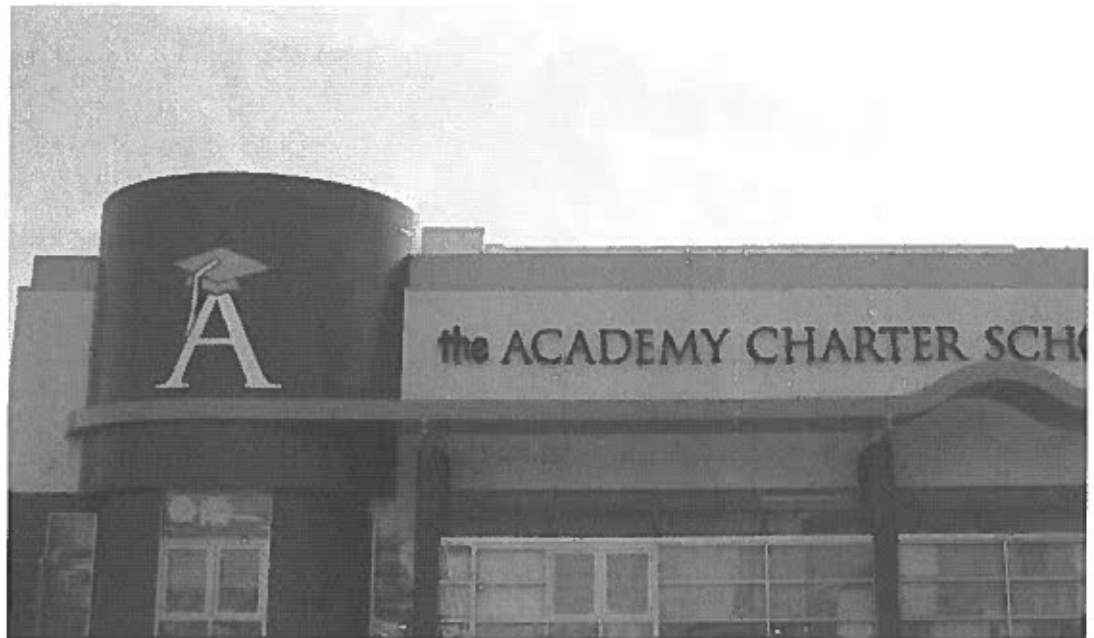
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Plans for charter school expansion move forward

By: Adina Genn April 7, 2020

The Academy Charter School in Hempstead is moving forward with expansion plans that include a new vocational school and middle school, as well as plans to accommodate additional elementary school students.

Academy currently lists schools in Hempstead and Uniondale, according to its website.

Academy aims to invest \$2 million to construct and equip a new vocational and technical high school on the academy's grounds at 100 Charles Lindbergh Blvd. in Uniondale. There, students would receive technical vocational training in the culinary arts, technology and medical fields.

Its first class of 125 students is expected in the fall. Academy received approval in February for the career education program from the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, which authorizes charter schools in the state said.

The charter school would also invest \$11.9 million to construct a new three-story facility with 18 classroom parking lot in Hempstead. And it would invest \$16.6 million to expand its Uniondale facility to create a middle school.

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Academy Charter School's high school is expected to graduate its first class in June with 95 percent having college acceptances, school officials said.

Academy Charter is working with the Town of Hempstead Local Development Corp, which this week announced that, at an April 3 teleconference meeting, it had agreed to a preliminary approval a \$58 million tax-exempt bond sale by the school.

"There is no doubt that this is the kind of project that we take great pride in," Frederick Parola, CEO of the Local Development Corp. said in a statement.

"This planned bond sale will benefit the children of Hempstead, Uniondale and the surrounding communities," Parola added.

In addition, the school plans to refinance bonds sold in 2011, 2013 and 2017 under the aegis of the LDC.

The LDC provides low-interest, tax-exempt bond financing to not-for-profits, educational institutions, hospitals and other entities or charitable organizations within the town. The sale is subject to further LDC staff review, a preliminary final approval by the LDC board, and the approval of the town supervisor.

No date has been set for a public hearing because of COVID-19, and federal rules governing bond sales currently do not permit teleconferenced public hearings.

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